

March 16, 2000

*(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)*

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Ladies and gentlemen, we will get started with the first panel for this afternoon. It is about the situation with Falun Gong practitioners and adherents in China and the community there. The spokesman for the Falun Gong will be Erping Zhang, who has been a Falun Gong practitioner since 1994 and has become one of the foremost spokesmen for the movement in the United States, including before the U.S. Congress. He has served on a number of occasions as the interpreter for Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong.

The second witness we are not going to name for reasons of his own personal security. He arrived recently from a Central Asian country in which he has been living, and he will offer U.S. fresh insights into the human rights situation, including the religion U.S. and political persecution of the Uighur people in the Zixiu province of China.

We all appreciate very much his willingness to make this very long journey to bring out information from a place in the world which we have had really very little information. His testimony will be introduced by Dr. Erkin Sidick, who is a member of the board of directors of the Uighur American Association. The Association's purpose is to promote freedom, human rights, and democracy for the Uighur people and to expose human rights violations in Zixiu.

The third witness who I will introduce, even though he is not sitting here -- he will be here in just a moment -- Dr. Dru Gladney, who is the professor of Asian studies at the University of Hawaii, and among his specialties is the anthropology of religion in China and in Central Asia. His book, "Muslim Chinese, Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic of China," won the Phi Kappa Phi book award in 1992. He speaks Mandarin, Turkish, Kaza, Russian, and plain old English.

We will begin with Mr. Zhang.